

Dismounted Training for the Company Team

by Captain Celestino Perez, Jr.

Many tanks are lost through a failure of the crews or the platoon leader to make a foot reconnaissance. People get vehicle bound and never dismount. Before exposing a valuable tank and the lives of its crews to danger of destruction by crossing an unreconnoitered skyline or emerging from cover, a foot reconnaissance should be made. Here again we have the question of haste and speed. It may seem a waste of time to look, but it is certain death to get on the front slope within effective range of undiscovered antitank [weapons] or lurking enemy tanks.

— General George S. Patton, May 1944

Dismounted training is an inexpensive technique that can help company teams begin to reverse trends that have led to poor performance at the National Training Center. When compared to mounted training, these techniques require few resources, and relatively little planning and preparation, but with frequent repetition can enable company teams to improve in precisely those areas many fall short. The following training materials best illuminate the company team's weaknesses while in the offense:

- A videotaped OPD entitled "Red Zone Brief," given by then-COL James Grazier, former chief of the Operations Group at the National Training Center. The tape was produced at Fort Hood in 1996.

- A Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) article entitled "Black 6, this is Red 6...contact...." (Combat Training Center Quarterly Bulletin No. 96-10)

- A CALL Special Study published in March 1998 entitled "Closing with the Enemy — Company Team Maneuver."

- For defensive training, the CALL article entitled "Building an Engagement Area: A Blueprint for Success," (Combat Training Center Quarterly Bulletin No. 96-7) is a valuable tool. The article explains 17 nuts-and-bolts tasks the company team commander must accomplish to enable a successful defense.

Much of the analysis in the videotape and the CALL publications grew out of shortcomings in the early editions of *FM 71-1* and *ARTEP 71-1-MTP*, which failed to provide the proper focus on maneuver. Consequently, platoon- and company-level leadership did not clearly focus their orders and after-action reviews on maneuver (which is the reason company teams exist). I believe the revised *FM 71-1* (1998) and the final draft of *ARTEP 71-1-MTP* (1998) provide the proper focus on maneuver addressed in the Grazier videotape and CALL publications. Company commanders and platoon leaders who read the revised doctrine in light of the videotape and CALL publications will increase their understanding of the company/team's tactical potential.

These exercises collectively address weaknesses in terrain appreciation at the levels of individual, crew, platoon, and company; target acquisition and 360-degree security; maneuver; and company defense. Using dismounted training, it is possible to train these tasks to a high degree of proficiency at low cost. Besides the obvious cost advantage, dismounted training offers other benefits:

- It enables all soldiers in the company to visualize how the company commander wishes them to fight, particularly since crew, section, and platoon movements will occur on a scale large enough to see relations between vehicles, leaders, and terrain. This technique offers significant merits over a sand-table exercise, which reduces the training audience and imperfectly approximates mounted execution.

- Since a soldier will train in relative proximity to his leader, his every action is subject to immediate feedback and on-the-spot correction. For instance, if a TC moves out of his fighting position by moving directly forward, his platoon sergeant or platoon leader can correct his decision and order proper execution. If a section or platoon masks the overwatching element's observation, a leader can readily observe and correct the error.

- When units later get around to mounted training, they will be better able to focus on those tasks neglected during dismounted training, like casualty

evacuation and resupply. The unit will also be capable of dealing with advanced tactical problems sooner. For instance, a commander will not find it necessary to explain set-move drills, leaving more time to develop his sense of when to shift the main effort. Also, the dismounted training will produce intellectually prepared leaders with numerous tactical experiences upon which to draw.

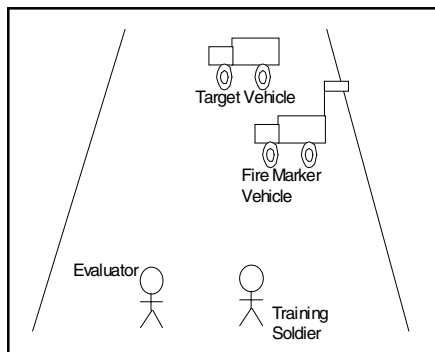
Leaders should understand that unless a unit can conduct a task dismounted, it has little hope of successful mounted execution. Exercises should be like athletic practice sessions, with many repetitions, numerous halts, restarts, and informal AARs. You'll probably find that soldiers are better at organized team athletics than they are at their soldierly craft, no doubt because the typical soldier has participated in athletics more frequently than he has participated in training engagements. Indeed, if a certain tank platoon has been lucky enough to play pick-up games or intramural sports regularly, one will probably find that the tank platoon is a better basketball team than a tank platoon.

The frequent repetition of dismounted maneuver will allow leaders and crews to know each other's strengths, weakness, and tactical habits, knowledge that can be gained easily during dismounted training. One will also notice improvements in dispersion, command and control, reporting, cross-talk at all levels, and actions upon contact.

Besides the opportunity for companies and platoons to develop standard operating procedures, many of the exercises offer opportunities for professional development. As one company goes through an exercise, the remainder of the battalion's officers might observe. To be sure, there is also much opportunity for professional development prior to doing these exercises. Suggested topics include a review of doctrinal terms, mission statements, maneuver, and engagement-area development.

It must be noted that the exercises described are untried. Some may require modifications to be feasible, and improvements making others more effective will surely arise. Furthermore, the article assumes a familiarity with the recom-

mendations offered by the CALL products listed above. My intent is merely to provide situations that exploit intellectual preparation and provide a forum to practice and refine tactics, techniques, and procedures short of mounting our vehicles. Here are some examples:



Call for Fire

1. A HMMWV or dismounted soldier serves as the target to be engaged by indirect fire. The target, which should be visible between 1000m to 3000m away, is stationary.

2. The soldier, given a map, his current location, binoculars, and a radio (hand-held or SINCGARS man-pack), calls for fire to the evaluator and the fire marker on radio frequency A.

3. A HMMWV serves as a fire marker. The fire marker, which is conspicuously marked, drives to the location of the call for fire using a plugger. He can easily get there by quickly storing the call-for-fire grid as a waypoint. The fire marker monitors frequency A.

4. Steps 1 through 3 are repeated as the adjustments lead the fire marker to the target vehicle. As the evaluated soldier achieves proficiency, the target vehicle will replicate a slowly moving target.

Note: The exercise can incorporate mortar training. The soldier issues his fire commands to the mortar FDC, which then directs the guns through a series of dry-fire missions.

5. This system has the benefit of requiring soldiers and leaders to study and appreciate terrain, a skill that is too often neglected. This study facilitates not only more accurate calls for fire, but improves accurate reporting by enhancing a soldier's sense of range and terrain appreciation. Leaders should take this exercise a step further by training to translate a two-dimensional map into a three-dimensional image.

Target Acquisition

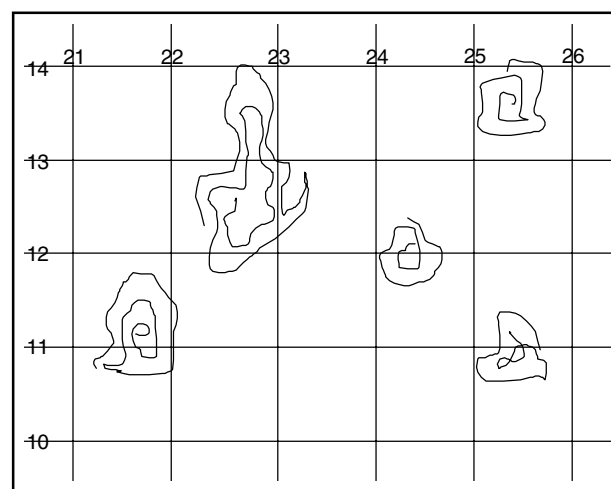
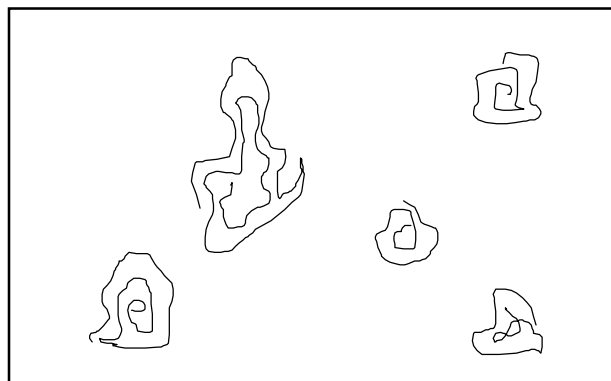
1. One platoon conducts the exercise, while a second platoon provides support. The company commander is the platoon evaluator. The platoon leader will have his tank crews walking together in various formations and movement techniques across a piece of terrain. Each tank crew will have a hand-held radio and will communicate on a platoon net. The company commander will monitor this net. As the platoon maneuvers across the terrain, the supporting platoon leader will position one- or two-man teams throughout the axis of advance. As the training platoon advances towards a supporting team, the team will make some movement that should be noticed by the training platoon. Once this movement begins, the team, which possesses a hand-held radio on a different frequency, notifies the company commander, who has a second hand-held radio for this purpose. The company commander then starts a stopwatch. The object is for the appropriate crew (which was assigned a specific sector on the move) to acquire the target and submit a contact report to the platoon leader within eight seconds.

2. After the platoon's run, the total time for target acquisition will be computed. The first goal is to achieve the standard of a platoon acquiring each target within eight seconds. The next goal is to achieve the lowest total acquisition time. The final goal will be to obtain the most accurate grids and target description (one- or two-man team?) for the target location. This drill facilitates platoon competition.

Actions on Contact and Maneuver

1. The company team commander visits a piece of terrain with multifarious terrain features. The terrain should be at least as wide and long as a golf-course fairway, but it should offer more interesting terrain.

2. The company team commander produces a rough map of the area (see examples at upper left), keeping in mind that



the scale must facilitate walk-through missions. The grid lines should correspond with the dominant terrain features. The map is reproduced and issued to platoon leaders and platoon sergeants, the company XO, the 1SG, and the commander.

3. The S3 or battalion commander issues the company commander a simple order based on the map and limited graphics. The order might explain a movement to contact mission for a lead company team.

4. The company commander has about one hour to prepare and issue a simple order, to include additional graphic control measures, and issue it to his orders group.

5. The order should include a probable line of deployment that depicts the point at which movement (i.e., formations) ends and bounding begins. It should also include drills that explain how maneuver, i.e., bounding under direct-fire contact, should occur.

6. The commander's control measures should allow for maximum flexibility.

7. The commander and his platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, executive officer,

and first sergeant execute the mission by walking through the terrain. The S2 produces elements depicting various forms of contact. The commander, controlling his company via hand-held radio on a company net, reacts to the forms of contact. The platoon leaders and platoon sergeants each have a radio on the company frequency. A variation includes having the company commander apart from the battle unable to see the company's movement, thereby having to rely solely on reports and his battle tracking. Eventually, the wingmen tanks may participate if the terrain is sufficiently spacious.

8. The executive officer and company commander have two hand-held radios, one monitoring the battalion net (someone should be appointed to role-play the battalion commander) and one on the company net. Reporting to higher occurs according to SOP.

9. It is also possible to accomplish this exercise without battalion support. The commander can assign his headquarters platoon to depict the enemy while he acts as the sole evaluator, ensuring that he is training down to section level. The exercise can be used at platoon level using the same concept. The platoon leader reports to his commander while he maneuvers his tank commanders over the terrain.

Building an Engagement Area

1. The following exercise is a variation on the Tactical Exercise Without Troops. The battalion commander issues the company commander a FRAGO. The battalion is to conduct a defensive operation. The company commander is to establish a battle position. The battalion commander gives the company the general area in which the defense will take place. A general enemy situation is included.

2. Immediately, the company commander and his lieutenants begin engagement-area development with initial but incomplete information.

3. About one hour later, the battalion commander visits the area and gives the company commander more specific guidance. The guidance includes: 1) the TF TRP marking the location where the TF commander wants to kill the enemy; 2) as much of paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 of the TF OPORD as possible; 3) the time and location of the formal OPORD (notional); 4) a good visualization of how the enemy will attack, to include the enemy's use of combat multipliers; 4) the TF commander's intent for fires; 5) location

of the company team sector or the tentative battle position area; 6) a clearly defined task and purpose; 7) task organization changes; 8) company team specified tasks; 9) designation of key and decisive terrain for both friendly and enemy forces; 10) location and responsibilities for employing additional TF TRPs; 11) the purpose for obstacle groups; and 12) coordination requirements.

4. The company commander should have one or two HMMWVs, company and platoon TRP marking kits, and sufficient pickets to delineate the general outline of the company's allotted obstacles. Tank commanders should accompany their platoon leader.

5. After about three hours of preparation, the commanders should explain his defense to the battalion's officers in an OPD format. The commander will have marked his company and platoon TRPs, marked the location of his obstacles, marked his battle positions, and identified his indirect-fire targets. Each tank commander is in his fighting position.

6. The commander can limit the training and support requirements to company level.

Defensive Fire Control and Distribution

1. A company team commander issues his platoons a simple order explaining the defense of a piece of terrain.

2. Platoon leaders and tank commanders develop the company engagement area. The objective here is not obstacle emplacement (which receives attention in the previous exercise) as much as direct-fire planning and TRP emplacement.

3. Once the preparation is complete, the tank commanders occupy their fighting positions. The tank commanders and the platoon leader each have a radio, whose frequency the evaluator is monitoring. Once the NLT-defend-time passes, one of the company's platoons (possibly the headquarters platoon) acts as the OPFOR. Their sole purpose is to send increasing numbers of soldiers into the engagement area from the enemy's direction. Each soldier will carry a sign — visible with binoculars from approximately 1500 meters away — that denotes whether the soldier is replicating a personnel carrier, a tank, or a set of troops. The platoons and company commander must then exercise fire control and distribution with the goals of no double-tapped targets, effective and concise cross talk, and accurate reporting. The key point is the method by which crews determine when to fire at a specific target depending on its location

within the engagement area and the type of weapon system it is. As the units gain proficiency, some of the OPFOR soldiers may replicate friendly vehicles, the speed with which the OPFOR enters the engagement area may be increased, and the call-for-fire exercise may be added.

Platoon and Company Maneuver

1. Some form of direct-fire feedback is required for this exercise, such as MILES equipment for the dismounted soldier and an M-16 rifle. However, a disadvantage to MILES is that it requires several weeks of planning, particularly with regard to the blank ammunition. Another option is for the brigade or battalion to purchase a set number of paint-ball guns and accessories. In order to train one company for an offensive mission, the equipment's distribution (whether MILES or paint-ball) would be as follows:

Each tank crew, consisting of four soldiers, would get only one weapon and move as a crew at all times. The gunner carries the weapon, which should have the maximum range possible within reasonable cost constraints. The driver carries a plugger. The loader carries a set of binoculars. The tank commander carries the map and communication device, whether it is a SINCGARS manpack or, more likely, a hand-held radio. Platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, and the company commander should each have two radios if possible. This set-up would allow for the proper replication of platoon, company, and battalion nets.

2. The S3 or battalion commander issues a simple order explaining the mission the company is to accomplish. The commander has approximately two hours until LD time. The evaluator looks to see that the company commander depicts the point at which movement transitions to bounding, and where bounding transitions to maneuver.

3. The S2 controls the OPFOR, which can be as robust as cost will allow; i.e., if the battalion can obtain approximately seven enemy weapons, the S2 could establish a two-weapon CSOP, a one-weapon ambush position, and a four-weapon main defense. The S2 could replicate other forms of contact by simply telling a crewmember — in person — about the contact; e.g., Red 2, you are observing indirect fire at PJ565129.

4. The virtue of this exercise is that it allows the company commander to fully

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test whether his crews understand the transition between movement and maneuver, the use of terrain, battle drills, actions on contact, and target acquisition, all of which relate to negative trends for company teams during NTC rotations. If the FIST team participates, with a little more assets (the addition of a fire marker) the company could incorporate the call-for-fire exercise explained above. Furthermore, the brigade and battalion could train its companies and platoons on any piece of terrain more often and at a fraction of the cost of actual armored training.

5. Concerns relating to the paint-ball training include: 1) the soldiers' need to wear civilian clothes or specially purchased mechanic's coveralls (paintballs will stain); 2) the periodic cost of paintballs (which should be limited to 40 balls per exercise); 3) the periodic cost of CO²

cartridges; and 4) the one-time purchase of eye protection.

6. The same training can be accomplished using the MILES system for dismounted soldiers and 5.56 blank ammunition; however, the ability to replicate suppressive fires diminishes.

7. This exercise will enhance crew-level teamwork and contribute to cross-training leader positions. If a TC is hit, the crew's gunner takes the map and the radios. If the commander is hit, the succession of command is affected. Furthermore, if a gunner is hit, the crew can move and report, but it suffers a firepower kill. And if the driver is hit, the crew suffers a mobility kill. If the loader is hit, the crew suffers a communication kill.

8. The training can also enhance training without communication. If communication is denied to platoons, then the crews

will be forced to create and use a hand-signal or flag-signal SOP, which can then, with minor modification, be implemented during mounted training.

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